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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

June 20, 2003

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Thomas D. Watkins, Jr., Chairman

SUBJECT: Presentation on "Toward Universal Education: All Students
Educated All Together, All The Time"

Attached for your review is the document titled "Toward Universal Education: All Students Educated All Together, All The Time," which is a position statement on inclusive education within the public school system of Michigan by the Statewide Advocacy Coalition on Education.

Ms. Sylvia Kloc, representing the Statewide Advocacy Coalition on Education will present the report at the June 26, 2003, meeting. This item is on the agenda for the Committee of the Whole meeting and no action is anticipated.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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**TOWARD UNIVERSAL EDUCATION: ALL STUDENTS EDUCATED
ALL TOGETHER, ALL THE TIME**

**A Position Statement on
Inclusive Education within the
Public School Systems of Michigan
by the Statewide Advocacy Coalition on Education**

**June 26, 2003
Revised from document of
May 1995**

Statewide Advocacy Coalition on Education

Coalition Members

Autism Society of Michigan*

Developmental Disabilities Institute, Wayne State University*

Inclusive Education Network*

Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council*

Michigan Protection and Advocacy Services*

Student Advocacy Center*

The Arc of Northwest Wayne County*

The Arc Kent County*

The Arc Michigan*

United Cerebral Palsy – Metro*

United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan*

Washtenaw Association for Community Advocacy*

***Formally endorsed by Board as of August 31, 1995**

****Submitted for reendorsement as of June 26, 2003**

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TOWARD UNIVERSAL EDUCATION: ALL STUDENTS EDUCATED ALL TOGETHER, ALL THE TIME

AN INTRODUCTION

This position statement emerged from a series of discussions by organizations who want to re-shape education throughout Michigan's public schools. The unifying theme of our position is that all citizens must work together to create one effective public education system for all students.

The immediate impetus for this statement is a grave concern over the failures of our schools to prepare students with disabilities to participate in our communities as full members. Our broad vision, however, is a school system in which all belong and in which all learn together. It is our fervent hope that all citizens who care about education will join hands to revitalize an educational establishment that is not working for too many of its students.

Obstacles to inclusive communities are best and most effectively addressed at the point when they first appear. Therefore, it is beneficial to create community school settings where all students are educated all together, all the time.

TOWARD UNIVERSAL EDUCATION: ALL STUDENTS EDUCATED ALL TOGETHER, ALL THE TIME

The Problem

The fact that special education, career education, compensatory education, gifted education, early childhood education and adult education have evolved into highly complex parallel education bureaucracies is not surprising. These institutional silos have been patterned after the larger general education bureaucracy from which they were created. As public bureaucracies grow, individual jobs become more differentiated and more specialized. Bureaucracies become less flexible and insulated from external changes.

These parallel public education systems frequently have separate goals that are not connected to the school improvement initiatives of the general program. Rather than these parallel systems serving as support services to students within the general education classroom, they often tend to function as separate "pull out" systems. These parallel systems commonly function in separate "orbits" with separate funding systems, separate policies, separate rules, different procedures, specialized administrative structures, and an identification process for students that are designated for participation in the "pull out" model.

The Parallel Special Education System

The results of parallel special education programming have been disappointing, particularly for students who have needs for instructional support that are only available outside of the general education classroom. The parallel systems separate delivery structure removes the availability of resources that could be used to increase the support in the general education setting for all students. In special education very few students are ever allowed to return in full into the general education system once they enter this delivery model. In a study of 26 large cities, fewer than 5% of students labeled for special education services ever left that system (Gardner & Lipsky, 1989).

Only 57% of students labeled for special education services graduate from high school (22nd Annual Report to Congress, NESC, 2000). Currently only 32% of persons with disabilities, ages 18-64, work full- or part-time, compared to 81% of the non-disabled population— a 49% gap (National Organization on Disabilities, 2000). As a result, researchers, customers and policy makers are calling for a reconceptualization of the parallel special education system in favor of an universal design.

This call for full access to and participation in the general curriculum requires more than common standards, it requires the integration of academic and applied learning, and universal design.¹

¹ In terms of learning, universal design means the design of instructional materials and activities that allows the learning goals to be attainable by individuals with wide differences in their abilities. This means, for example, that a curriculum should include instructional and assessment alternatives to make it accessible and appropriate for individuals with diverse learning styles and abilities (Access to the General Education Curriculum, www.cast.org/ncac).

The successful implementation of universal education also depends on other factors, such as the knowledge and skill level of educators (Boudah, Schumaker, & Deshler, 1997; Carnine, 1995; Kameenui & Carnine, 1994; Tralli, Colombo, Deshler, & Schumaker, 1999), use of appropriate accommodations during instruction and testing (Elliot & Thurlow, 2000; Thurlow, Elliott & Ysseldke, 1998; Thurlow, House, Boys, Scott, & Ysseldyke, 2000), collaboration between regular education and special education personnel in designing educational programs for students with disabilities (Knight, 1998; Lenz & Scanlon, 1998), and the support and vision of educational leadership.

There is also a critical need to develop assessment and instructional strategies that are relevant to all students (including those who have significant learning needs), allowing them to successfully achieve State and local standards, as well as to develop other essential adult life skills through vocational education, training in adult living skills and community participation. Strategies such as universal design offer another approach to ensuring that students with disabilities access the full range of learning opportunities in the secondary education curriculum (Jorgensen, 1997; Orkis & McLane, 1998; Rose & Meyer, 1996).

To ensure that students with disabilities access the full range of general curricular options and learning experiences, there is a need to promote high expectations for student achievement and learning. High expectations must be maintained for students with disabilities across the full range of academic and nonacademic courses and programs available within elementary, middle schools and high schools nationally. This is consistent with the Federal Administration's blueprint for education reform, *No Child Left Behind*, makes schools accountable for ensuring that all students meet high academic standards. In order to maintain high academic standards, instructional strategies such as; differential teaching, universal design, and personalized learning practices, will need to be adopted.

The preponderance of opinion in the research about the special education separate delivery model is that poor results in the parallel system approach can be traced to three main factors: the harmful segregation and labeling of students in order for instructional support services to be delivered, low expectations for performance of students in the separate system and the lack of prevention services, positive behavioral supports and social skills instruction within the context of the general education service delivery system (National Association of School Boards, 1992; Skritic, 1991; National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 1994; Council of Administrators of Special Education, 1993; Jolivette, Stichter, Nelson, Scott & Liaupsin, 2000). The perpetuation of these negative trends is often supported by policies, prejudice and status quo bureaucratic process. To break this cycle, leaders and policy makers must design and implement a new inclusive model for the delivery of universal education.

What is a Universal Education System?

To be sure, a universal education system must look very different from the school systems that we are accustomed to. Certainly, to serve all students in one organization, there must be a reconceptualization of roles for staff so that all staff are responsible for the education of all students. Learning in this system involves a personal approach that includes more flexible groupings, teaching approaches, goals, and support systems. In a universal education system, better learning results are designed for all students, and the focus is on developing student strengths and on promoting success, cooperation and belonging. In a universal system, all resources in the community are used to provide flexible, easily accessible supports to meet the diverse educational needs of a total community of learners.

In an organizational sense, a universal system is a single system for funding, administering, and delivering quality student instruction. It has a public governance and accountability structure for funding and program administration. This single structure includes the flexibility to utilize resources to meet the instructional needs and develop the talents of all students. The finance structure includes an equitable formula and flexibility of resource distribution. The universal governance policy includes equal access to and opportunities for learning without labeling, separating or segregating students for service. This policy allows for instructional decisions to be made at the community school level, provided that all students can voluntarily access the instructional opportunities and resources that the school provides.

Instructional support is delivered with the personalized needs, strengths and talents of the student in mind. These identified needs, strengths and talents determine the services provided and accommodations are made to make these personalized education services possible. All staff within the school is responsible for the learning of all students and provides technology-supported learning activities, failure prevention services and additional support as needs are identified. Unique needs (i.e. Braille) are also identified and delivered at the school site. The system emphasizes a quality education that prepares each student for life long learning and economic wellbeing, while assuring that each student learns basic skills. The universal education system stresses the goals of universal proficiency as well as universal access and opportunity. The universal system is designed to meet the challenging goals of the NCLB Act by setting high expectations for student learning and holding schools accountable for results, while delivering instruction in a personalized way.

In a universal system students and staff are assured of a safe orderly and purposeful learning environment. All students will be provided with universal access to voluntary public school alternatives until the age of mandatory attendance or graduation, unless the students pose a danger to self and/or others that necessitates a specific alternative setting. A policy of zero tolerance of violent or chronic seriously disruptive behavior must be accompanied by required alternative services for those students who are removed from their public school.

The universal system is based on sound and demonstrated educational principles. These foundations are described in the following definitions.

10 Foundations of a Universal Public Education System

THE UNIVERSAL SCHOOL SYSTEM FOCUSES ON QUALITY EDUCATION AS ITS PRIMARY MISSION.

1. QUALITY INSTRUCTION

*** Meets the cognitive needs of all students in the class**

This requires curriculum-based assessment to determine the cognitive needs for each student and the availability of a variety of curricular materials and applications so that each student can learn, practice, and apply new learning according to her or his personal level of understanding.

*** Builds on students' experiences to extend their skills, knowledge, and/or insights**

Students learn best when the new learning builds on experience. Quality instruction is relevant, interesting, and understandable to students because it begins with what students have experienced and can therefore identify with and helps them move forward from that point to develop new skills, grasp new knowledge, and experience new insights. This includes mastery of the standards set by the core curriculum as well as meeting personalized goals.

*** Focuses on mastery learning rather than on comparisons among students**

Each student possesses different gifts and different areas where learning is more difficult. Self-esteem develops when each student focuses on her or his own increase in skills, knowledge, and insight without worrying about comparisons to others. Each student can strive to be the best that he or she can be in each area of learning. Quality instruction sets the tone by measuring each student's learning from that student's own baseline.

*** Teaches students to communicate their ideas**

Ideas must be communicated through speaking, writing, an alternative communication system, or action. Effective communication is a skill that can be learned and must be practiced.

- * Teaches students cooperation, tolerance, and conflict resolution through problem-solving**

Among the most important goals for education are those that result in people having the skills and knowledge to work together cooperatively with everyone toward common goals and to resolve the inevitable conflicts through peaceful problem-solving.

Quality instruction both models these skills and specifically teaches them on a daily basis.

- * Teaches student the skills they need to be responsible adults in a democratic society**

To be an active participant in a democratic society, students must learn to separate fact from opinion, understand basis statistics, communicate effectively, and think both logically and creatively.

- * Provides learning experiences that result in universal proficiency for every student**

All people require approximately an 80% success rate to maintain motivation to continue the effort. Quality instruction, recognizing this fact, gives each student tasks at her or his current level of learning with 80% of tasks expected to result in successful completion and 20% focused on new learning.

- * Provides for academic, practical and character development for each student**

Every student needs to learn academic skills, the practical or functional skills required in life, and the skills involved in gathering information and making informed decisions.

- * Provides a rich, personalized and challenging curriculum for all students**

Each student needs a personalized instructional plan that matches her or his abilities, interests and needs while meeting the requirements for educational accountability.

2. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

- * The Universal School System provides staff development opportunities for teachers and support personnel so they can meet the educational needs and develop the talents and strengths of all students.**

3. PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- * The Universal School System makes a commitment to assure full participation of families in decision making and to keep families engaged in their child's learning.**

4. COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- * The Universal School System obtains support from the community, state and federal government and interagency partners to provide the resources necessary to equip staff and maintain a learning environment that provides a quality education for all students together.

Universal education systems must rely on the involvement of the community. Quality schooling can only be provided when education is viewed as a collaborative community responsibility. Community collaboration and resource sharing are essential service components in the system.

5. FOCUS ON PREVENTION

In both the academic and behavioral realm, the universal school system provides prevention and intervention services that assure success for each student.

- * Immediate and intensive support is available so that we can invest in a quality future for students rather than focusing on remediation.

6. RESEARCH-BASED TEACHING & ASSESSMENT

- * The Universal School System uses research-based strategies to continuously review the curriculum, student results, staff development and service delivery systems to assure continuous quality improvement based on ongoing feedback and authentic assessment.

7. PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

- * The Universal School System is accountable to the public, and is governed by a community school board.

8. CHOICES & OPTIONS

- * The Unified School System provides choices and options for students and families as the experiences for students, under the guidance of the school, are designed and implemented.

9. DUE PROCESS PROVISIONS

- * In order to assure equity and access within the unified school structure, a simplified procedural due process system is provided for all students and families. This due process system is designed to provide a process of appeal for individuals who are denied access to a quality public education.

10. SCHOOL READINESS SERVICES

- * Parents are a child's first and most influential teacher. Working with the community, services are provided to enhance the capacity of families to meet the developmental needs of their children. In a universal system all families of children age 0-5 have access to parent education and school readiness services.

EVERY CHILD IN SCHOOL

A Proposal to Address the Exclusion of Students from School

In recent years with the passing of legislation to address school safety, increasing numbers of children have been involuntarily excluded from school for a variety of behavioral reasons. Some of these children have been excluded as a result of zero tolerance for weapons legislation and some for other behavioral issues. Many other children are similarly at risk of exclusion because educational plans do not address their behavioral difficulties.

A survey conducted during the 1996-97 school year found that more than 75% of all schools reported having zero tolerance policies for various student offenses (U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, 1999). In addition, there has been an increase in the presence of law enforcement officers and metal detectors in public schools (U.S. Department of Education and Justice, 1999). However, evidence suggests that such measures have been ineffective, or even counterproductive, in preventing school violence (Hyman & Perone, 1998; Mayer & Leone, 1999). Schools continue to exclude students with problem behaviors as a first-level response, often without implementing active instructional strategies for future problem prevention.

The first step in reversing these practices is instituting positive behavior support and functional behavior analysis systems to address student needs in an inclusive environment. Traditionally, students with problem behaviors have been placed in exclusionary environments (i.e., resource room, self-contained room, non-school placement). As more students identified with behavioral disabilities are being included in the general environment, questions have arisen regarding effective interventions with the general education setting. Recent literature provides support for the efficacy of functional behavioral assessment for most problem students in public school classrooms (Ellingson, Miltenberger, Stricker, Galensky, & Garlinghouse, 2000; Heckaman, Conroy, Fox & Chait, 2000).

The great benefit of functional assessment is the ability to assist in developing proactive (i.e., preventative), positive and individualized behavior intervention plans for students with challenging behaviors providing support for the development of these approaches is imperative for realizing the vision of a universal education system.

It is the position of the statewide advocacy coalition that all children of school age should be receiving effective educational services through high school graduation in a safe and nurturing environment. If children are not in school and are unsupervised during school hours, they suffer irreparable harm. Further, there is a substantial financial and social cost to society when its children are not educated.

Currently, the State of Michigan is not compiling comprehensive data on the numbers of and other information about children out of school. This information is vital both to understand the extent of this problem and for planning purposes. For children who have been excluded, Michigan is not systemically developing model alternative education programs even though viable alternative education models do currently exist.

Therefore, the Statewide Advocacy Coalition on Education proposes that the following steps be taken:

1. The State of Michigan adopt as policy and law the premise that all children should be educated.
2. The State of Michigan assures that to the maximum extent possible all children are educated in the general education setting and that supports are provided for effective intervention for students with behavioral difficulties.
3. The State of Michigan assumes responsibility for assuring that alternative education programs are in place and funded for children who have been excluded from the general education programs.
4. The Governor convenes a task force charged with developing a statewide initiative to address the above concerns.

YOUNG ADULT TRANSITION

The Problem Statement

There are currently 2,692 students ages 22-26 (Department of Special Education-Total 2001) in special education in Michigan.

Young adults with disabilities still face significant difficulties securing jobs, accessing postsecondary education, living independently and fully participating in their communities. With the passage of Federal legislation (Americans with Disabilities Act, P.L. 101-336; and the IDEA Amendments of 1997; P.L. 105-17) has come an expanding social awareness of accessibility and disability issues surrounding youth with disabilities seeking access to postsecondary education, life-long learning and employment (Benz, Doren & Yovanoff, 1998; Horn & Berkold, 1999).

National data reveals that students who exit the special education system tend to fit the following profile: unemployed or under employed and lacking social relationships, independent living situations, and religious affiliations, as well as a host of other indicators of meaningful and productive lives. (Edgar, 1990, National Association of Developmental Disabilities Council, Administration of Developmental Disabilities, 1992.) In Michigan, 57% of students in special education graduate from their public schools, and in all likelihood they do not fare any better in their outcomes than those across the United States.

The majority of students with disabilities ages 22-26 participate in segregated education programs designed to teach functional living and vocational skills. While a few model programs are housed in typical age appropriate education environments, they are far from the norm.

Too many students exit special education at age eighteen without jobs or the skills to live independently in their community of choice. The 22-26 program needs to be redesigned to better yield the results needed for this population.

In recent years, we have been demonstrating some measure of success in previously funded transition projects. They tend to have several key features in common:

1. Individualized natural support options.
2. Coordination of support services and resources.
3. Use of natural support systems in business and community service settings.
4. School-based and work-based strategies were designed to facilitate inclusion into community and work environments.

However, our experience thus far shows that such projects have affected the course offerings for a very limited number of students. We feel a great sense of urgency to draw upon our successes of these models and make them available to more students.

The following section will describe our proposal for 22-25 year old students to become contributing workers, community members as opposed to residents in group homes and day activity programs.

The Proposal for Action

Michigan needs to pilot a new approach to providing services to young adults with disabilities, ages 22-26, which will result in productive community outcomes. These pilots will provide information to the Department of Education and the Legislature on policy, costs, program issues, and outcomes for addressing the needs of this population. It is recommended that the pilot projects support up to 263 (10% of the existing population) young adults. The pilots would be initiated in such a manner as to ensure a geographically, culturally and disability diverse distribution. The pilots should incorporate each of the following best practices in their programs:

1. Interagency collaboration and funding
2. Student directed planning
3. Natural supports
4. Training in typical community settings
5. Student directed choice
6. Comprehensive evaluation of process and outcomes
7. Transitions to community services

The pilots would be identified through a Request for Proposal process to be initiated by a legislatively determined state agency/program, e.g., The Michigan Department of Education or Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council. Funding will be identified by the Legislature, through such vehicles as the redirection of existing education funds, state initiated project dollars or federal education resources. It is recommended that funds per student be calculated at current cost estimates for this population.

In order to fully test a variety of program options and to achieve the systemic changes necessary, this pilot should be conducted over a period up to five years. The basic approval will be the development of individualized programs that come from Personal Futures Planning, which place the student and family at the center of decision making. This approach is not unlike the current concept of the individualized program in the Special Education Code. However, current practice is far different from this approach, and intensive work over an extended period will be necessary to make this shift.

It is recommended that a separately funded external evaluation of the pilots be implemented to provide formative data to the pilots and summarize data to the State with regard to system change issues.

PATHWAY TO KINDERGARTEN

A Proposal for Early Childhood Action

In her State of the State address in February, Governor Jennifer Granholm shone a very bright spotlight on support for Early Childhood initiatives and making early childhood education a priority for our state. “Perhaps the single most important key to economic development,” she said, “is the one that opens the doors to learning in the minds of our young ones today. In the knowledge economy, business and education are linked; you cannot succeed at the former if you do not excel at the latter.” The Governor not only described her vision of “Project Great Start” that will “link people and institutions all across our state with a common strategy...to achieve a common purpose;” she challenged both Intermediate School Districts and philanthropic groups in every community to assume the leadership for early childhood support in local communities.

We now have a pool of research that tells us that prevention efforts pay off several-fold over the long term, both in human and financial costs. However, in today’s economic climate, prevention programs cannot survive if they are not a part of a range of services that meet the varied needs of families and children. Research also tells us that prevention efforts are more successful when embedded in a more universal system of support: “Rather than argue over the relative merits of universal versus targeted programs, both need to operate in support of the other.”²

A state-wide system must begin with universal access for all parents and their young children and should include a continuum of services that include three levels of support:

1. Promotion – to enhance the healthy growth and development of all young children;
2. Prevention – for families whose children face developmental and/or environmental risks;
3. Intervention – for families where parents and/or children have identified physical, social, emotional or cognitive problems for which appropriate intervention and treatment services are known to improve child outcomes.

In addition, the system must be a community-based, highly collaborative one that actively involves and engages a broad range of stakeholders, including:

- Parents
- Health Providers
- Family Support/Prevention Programs
- Social Services
- Education
- Private Non-profit
- Child Care
- Government

² Daro, Deborah. Taking Our Work to Scale: Lessons From the Past. Birth 23 News. Winter 2002, Issue 3, Ounce of Prevention Fund. Chicago, IL.

- **Business/Industry**

The current educational system frequently segregates students with special needs from their non-disabled peers. Through the Individual Family Service Plan and the Individualized Education Planning processes school personnel often present segregated, center-based services as the most appropriate, least restrictive service. As a result, our youngest students may never have the opportunity to experience natural environments. Research clearly demonstrates that if these children begin school in segregated programs, they are much less likely to experience education in general education classrooms with their non-disabled peers.

Natural environments are needed to provide children with disabilities the opportunity to have integrated experiences with their non-disabled peers. To ensure that all children have typical childhood experiences and successful preparation for kindergarten, the following proposal for action is presented

Pathway to Kindergarten
A Proposal for Action

1. The Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP), for children ages 0-3, will provide the option of natural environments, such as typical preschool or daycare programs, or community-based environments (e.g., home neighborhood park, play group, etc.) appropriate for the child's individual goals. The Individual Education Plan (IEP), for children five-years and older, will begin with the assumption that children with special needs can be successfully included in their neighborhood kindergarten with appropriate services and supports.
2. Parent and professional partnering should drive the child's educational success in natural environments.
3. Training related to the benefits of natural environments and educational best practices will be available to typical preschool and daycare staff to ensure competent care, acceptance and participation of ALL children.
4. Training on positive behavioral supports and medication administration will be provided to school staff, including typical preschool and daycare staff.
5. State licensing regulations for preschool and daycare centers will provide for the personal care needs of all children in attendance (e.g., diaper changing) and will mirror family-centered practice.
6. To support student success in natural environments and general education classrooms, the Individual Family Service Plan and the Individual Education Plan will provide the necessary supports such as, supplementary aids and services, and curriculum modifications.
7. The Individualized Family Service Plan should be continued for students with special needs, ages 3-5.

While supporting improved early educational services for ALL children, the Pathway to Kindergarten proposal promotes less restrictive options to families of children with developmental disabilities and improves early childhood experiences for all children, including those with identified disabilities who present challenges in preschool settings.